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Window Treatment

Mary A. Covert

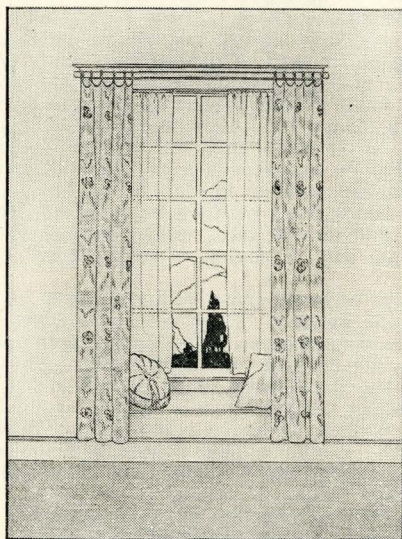
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Window Treatment



*"Brighten the corner where you are
by making the most of what you have"*

SOUTH DAKOTA STATE COLLEGE
· EXTENSION SERVICE
A. E. Anderson, Director
Brookings, S. D.

Window Treatment

By

Mary A. Covert

Extension Specialist in Home Management

Correctly dressed windows are the result of studied relationships, the harmonizing and balancing of details in house decoration and furnishing.

There should be close harmony in all windows facing the public, a consistency in line, texture and color. It is only on a rear or sheltered side that one may use a glazed chintz shade at one window, a colored glass curtain at another and a perky, white ruffled tie back one at a third. Some houses have just such an obscured side. Often it is the kitchen, bath and bedrooms which are located there. These rooms, as a rule, do not open directly into other rooms, so lend themselves to individual treatment.

Windows should be thought of as part of the exterior. They should blend with the style of the house, the color and texture of its walls and even show a relationship to the flowers and shrubs at its base. A large formal house with a formal landscape requires curtains of different style and material than a little house with its informal setting.

Windows should show consistency with one another when viewed from the inside. They should conform in style to the lines of the interior and blend in color tone and texture with walls, floors and furnishings. When well treated, they tend to sink into, rather than obtrude in this interior picture. It is seldom that a window is featured as a special decorative note.

Colors which clash or lack harmony should not be used in rooms which open directly into one another. Each room may have its accented color but these colors must harmonize. The colors accented in the different rooms are tied together by some one color running throughout the house, which should appear at least three times in each room. A more pleasing effect is produced when it appears in a variety of shades or tints. Curtains form a good medium for introducing yellow which seems to be the most adaptable color. It may appear in cream, beige, ecru, ivory, peach, burnt orange, brick, russet, olive, citron, tan, brown and almost an endless list of other color tones.

The coloring, design and texture of floor coverings and walls form a basis for the selection of curtain material. The style of woodwork, style of furniture and the line effect produced by the arrangement of furniture combine to determine the style of curtains. Since these factors vary from room to room we find variation in curtains throughout the house. Glass curtains, for example, may be ivory colored scrim in one room, biege tinted marquisette in another and cream color voile in a third. Draperies, likewise, will vary in texture, color tone and design. Other variations may be introduced through the use of different width hems, headings, bindings and other decorative features or in the method of hanging. There is no reason for monotony in harmonious curtaining.

Kinds of Curtains and Materials Adapted to Their Use

Window dressing originated to give privacy and to shut out light, heat and cold. Curtains are classed as shades, glass curtains and over-curtains or drapes. Shades are meant to exclude or soften the light and to give privacy. Glass curtains are used to tone down light, give daytime privacy and to tie the windows to the exterior and interior decorative schemes. Drapes are used to temper light, exclude heat and cold and to tie windows to the decorative scheme of the room.

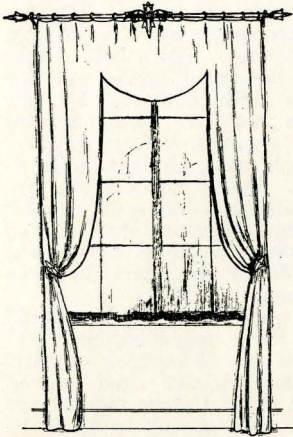


Fig. 1.—Cut-a-way style curtain hung on decorated rod with matching fixtures to hold back drapes.

Our feeling, in regard to the amount of sunlight and privacy needed, is changing. There is a tendency to discard shades, using drapes or draw curtains which can be pulled together as needed. We like to "see out" and to "look in". An unobstructed view of part of the window lends much to the hospitable atmosphere of the home. Glass curtains have a softening and unifying function and their absence gives a formal, austere air which is not compatible with the average home.

Shades

The newer shades give privacy without excluding the light. They tone the light and act as a color blender. They come in a wide variety of tone-colors, most of which blend nicely with both the interior and exterior color schemes.

Occasionally the right colored shade for an attractive exterior does not fit in with the interior color scheme. A special curtain, having the desired exterior color on one side and the interior color on the other may be ordered. Two shades (one opaque) are used effectively in rooms where the light, at times, needs to be entirely excluded. The inner shade may be a specially designed home made one. A heavy draw curtain may serve this purpose also. Two sets of draw sash curtains are sometimes used to replace shades or to add to the darkening effect, one set for the upper section of the window and the other for the lower; each may be drawn or opened as needed.

Unpainted Holland and Scotch cloth woven from dyed thread and pounded to give the characteristic finish, are the best shade fabrics on the market. Next in durability is oil hand-painted cambric. Many shade fabrics are filled to give body. This filling often drops out leaving holes and cracks. These poor quality shades are finished to resemble so closely the Holland and Scotch fabrics and oil hand-painted cambric that it is difficult to distinguish them. The only safeguard is to buy from reliable firms. Most firms producing reliable shade fabrics can be depended upon to use a reliable roller for its mounting.

Homemade shades of linen, crash, unbleached muslin, plain colored cotton fabrics, cretonne, chintz or oil cloth are becoming popular because of their durability, easy cleaning quality and the color note which they may add.

Shades should fit close to the window panes, within the window frame. They should be drawn two-fifths or one-third the way down from the top of the window unless this partly obscures a lovely view or mars the effect of other curtaining. In such a case, they should be rolled to the top and used only when needed for privacy or to shut out glaring light.

Glass Curtains

Glass curtains as a rule should be quite sheer, plain in weave and small in design, the design giving the effect of texture rather than design when hung. When used alone without drapes, they may be more distinctive in design and style.

Glass curtains should be consistent in texture and weave with the drapes used over them. Organdy, sheer linen, fine crisp voiles and grenadines are used with chintz, fine cretonnes and other semi-transparent

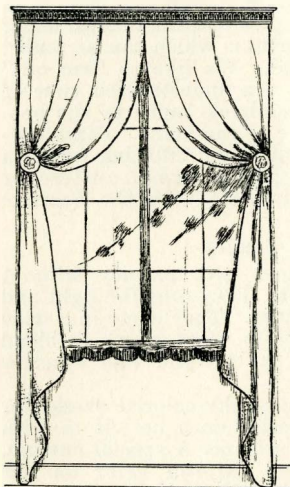


Fig. 2.—Narrow cornice board and drape tied back above center of length.

white walls and drapery material having a white background.

There should be contrast between glass curtains and drapes in fabric design. Printed, lace or jacquered weave glass curtains should be used only with drapes which are plain in weave or color unless the design in the glass curtain is so small and all over that when hung the effect is of texture rather than design.

Glass curtains and wall finish should show consistency in design, both as to size and type. This is difficult to secure. The better plan is to use curtains plain in color and weave with figured walls. Glass curtains plain in weave and color may be used with drapes plain in weave and color. This combination gives an air of quiet dignity and need not be monotonous as color interest may be secured through carefully selected room accessories. The plain curtains and drapes may be relieved by harmonizing applied hems, bindings or other decorations.

Glass curtains should be consistent in texture with walls, upholstery and other room furnishings. Rough plastered walls and massive furnishings require coarse, open, heavy-meshed glass curtains.

Draperies

Draperies should harmonize with the coloring in the rug and upholstery and their color should find repeats about the room in different places, in pictures, vases, lamps, cushions or other accessories.

Draperies may be semi-transparent, but never transparent. Two sheer materials are not used at the same window. Most of the cotton drapery fabrics are used unlined as one of their chief values is to give color glow to the room. Figured linens and some of the other loosely woven printed fabrics are lined to preserve the design as light passing through it tends to blur and obliterate it. When selecting figured material, it should be held in fold to the light to make sure of the effect. Sateen and pongees

cotton drapes. Fine scrim and marquissette blend well with linen and rayon. Heavier scrim and fine casement cloth are suitable with heavier cretonnes. Fish net, other coarse nets and theatrical gauze may be used with monk's cloth, denim and crash. Brussels net with real lace combines well with heavy silk, brocades, velvets and velours. More simple nets, china silk, georgette, organdette, sheer marquissettes are used with satin, taffeta or other silk drapes. Pongee, light weight casement cloth, dotted swiss, cheese cloth, grenadine, scrim and nets are all suitable for glass curtains when used without drapes.

Whatever the weave selected, it should be even and free from imperfections. Uneven weave means an ill-hanging curtain. Material with firmly twisted and woven thread is the best buy. Coarse meshes are not economical as they shrink so as to be almost useless when laundered.

Glass curtains should harmonize in color tone with the drapes, a warm tone with warm tone. When figured drapes are used, the glass curtains should blend with the background. White is never as effective as cream for glass curtains unless used with

are used for lining brocades, velvets, velours and linens. Unbleached muslin may be used for cretonne.

Drapery material having a fine weave and hard finish should be selected for small, crowded or warm looking rooms. Pile fabrics and very rough textured cloth give an impression of heat and weight and should be used in large rooms having a bare, cold, hard feeling.

Draw Curtains

Typical draw curtains are made of case-ment cloth, velours, heavy brocades, silks, rayon, cotton crepe, cretonnes, muslin and other cotton fabrics.

Special Problems in Selecting Materials

Relation of Texture and Color to Light

For rooms with northern exposure, the glass curtains should be especially sheer. The light should be brightened by passing through warm toned materials, those having a tinge of yellow, orange or yellow rose. Draperies should be semi-transparent and of warm vivid colors.

For rooms with southern exposure, it is best to use semi-transparent and durable glass curtains as the heavier material distributes the light more evenly and eliminates unpleasant glare. The semi-transparent glass curtains protect the draperies against the heat and intense light. Expensive drapes at south windows should be lined. Sunfast fabrics in subdued, mellow tones should be used.

There is scarcely any limit to the suitability of color and fabric for east windows except that it must harmonize with the furnishings of the room. Rooms having only east windows, however, have a tendency to be dark in the afternoon so the glass curtains should be transparent and the drapes of such texture or style as not to exclude the light. The color should tend toward the warmer tones as it is needed for the afternoon and evening effect.

Rooms with only western exposure present a conflicting problem. The windows must admit light and give cheer in the morning and subdue afternoon glare and heat. The materials should be durable. Good quality glass curtains in neutral tone with draperies of heavy material made in draw curtains is perhaps the best solution. If heavy or lined, the drapes may be of a warm color, adding forenoon cheer without intensifying the afternoon glare.

Factors Determining Selection of Design

The vari-colored, conventionalized floral pattern is the wisest choice of figured material for the average home. It adapts itself well to either formal or semi-formal treatment and lends itself to a variety of color schemes. Later another color from it may be chosen to dominate. With a few new accessories to harmonize, the room will take on a different atmosphere simply through change of color emphasis.

Plain, broad striped drapery material gives a restful and dignified air to very spacious rooms. It tends, however, to make windows look narrow and high while breadth is the effect generally desired. Broken stripes

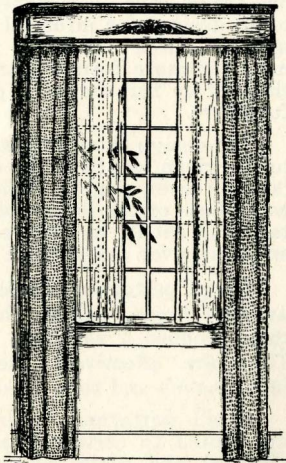


Fig. 3.—Wide cornice board replacing valance.

cut by geometrical or floral designs are preferable. Stripes combined with vines or trellis give a lightness and airiness often desired for informal treatment. Geometric figures combined with stripes are used for more formal treatment and adapt themselves for use with plain, modernistic furniture.

The design should repeat itself five times to the given length of the drapery when finished. (cover page). This rule holds true regardless of the length of the finished curtain and should be adhered to except when small all over designs are being considered.

Large patterned fabrics are not for the average home, unless when held in folds they produce a softened, all over effect. They are effectively used only in very large rooms and then used sparingly.

Small patterned natural floral designs are suited to certain types of bed rooms. Checked and plaid materials are adapted to either bed rooms or kitchens.

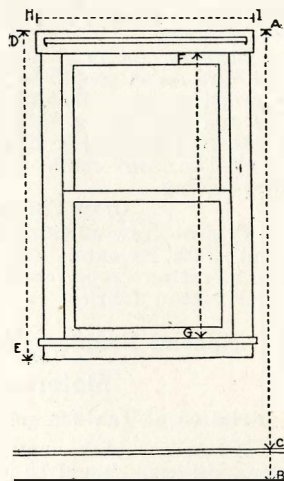


Fig. 4.—To measure for curtains use a yard stick.

Styles And Their Adaptation

Selection and Adaptation of Styles

The general trend of fashion is toward simplicity both in styles of curtains and in the methods of their hanging. Scallops, fringes and fancy braid trimmings are giving place to plain tailored finishes.

Pendent hanging is increasing in popularity. Drapes and semi-transparent glass curtains used without drapes are hung by rings from wooden or metal rods. These rods are simple painted ones or more ornate ones with wrought end and center ornaments (cover page and Fig. 1). The color of the rods and ornaments harmonizes with the curtains. Valances are not used with the pendent hanging. Drapes covering the upper portion of the window and cut-a-way toward the sides give a valance effect and permit the more simple hanging (Fig. 1). A cornice board narrow or four to six inches in width and finished to harmonize with the drapes, may be used instead of a valance. (Fig. 2 and 3).

Valances are still used to correct architectural and curtain defects in formal or semi-formal rooms. With tie-backs to match they give personality to bedroom and kitchen. In general they are more simple in line and tailored in finish.

Tie-backs match or harmonize closely with the curtains on which they are used, both as to material and structural design. Fixtures matching decorative rods are being used to fasten back heavy draperies (Fig. 1).

Either glass curtains or drapes may be tied back. They are tied back above or below the middle of their length (Fig. 1 and 2). The exact placing of the tie-back depends upon the relative length and width of the window and the draping quality of the curtain.

Treatment of Special Windows and Doors

Adaptation of style and material can apparently correct many structural errors. If the ceiling is too high, a valance with drapes reaching

to the window sill tends to lower it. Drapes hung straight without valance and reaching to the floor apparently increase the height.

The window which is much too high and narrow should have drapes extending beyond the casing so that their inner edge just covers it. They should reach only to the sill and be topped with a valance. The glass curtains should be single and sheer.

For the very short and extremely broad window, the drapes should reach to the lower edge of the window apron and cover a large part of the glass at the sides. The valance should be placed above the window, the lower edge just covering the casing. Glass curtains hung straight, but separated, will tend to decrease apparent width.

A window seeming too small in general may be apparently enlarged by using a valance above the window and draperies extending beyond the casings, the inner edge of drapes and valance just covering the inner edge of the casing. The drapes may reach either to the bottom of the window apron or to the floor, depending upon which gives better balance to the window.

If the window is well proportioned but too large for the wall space, its apparent size can be reduced by using soft materials, blending in color tone with the wall for both the drapes and the glass curtain. The glass curtain should be sheer and hung straight, separated at center. The drapes should be hung to reach to the bottom of the window apron or to the floor.

Caseament windows are usually covered with full glass curtains, held close as possible by flat rods at both top and bottom. The newer fashion, however, lets the bottom hang free. The drape is usually of draw curtain style.

French doors are treated the same as casement windows. Drapes for French doors are usually out of place in the average home. When used they must not interfere with the opening and closing of the door. A specially designed, hinged rod permits the drape to swing in unison with the door.

Curtain Construction

Measuring for Curtains

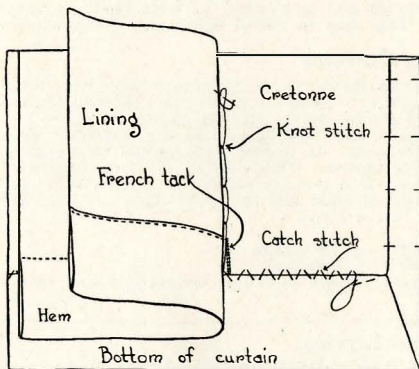


Fig. 5—Details in process of lining draperies.

Use a yard stick instead of a tape measure. Know the correct length of curtains and drapes. For a narrow room, a small or informal room, the drapes should reach to the lower edge of the window apron. For large or more formal rooms the drapes should reach to the base board or to the floor. This rule holds except for windows treated to correct architectural defects. All glass curtains end at the window sill. Draw curtains may reach either just to the sill or to the lower edge of the window apron.

For drapes or draw curtains that extend to bottom of window apron, measure from top of casement (D) to bottom on window apron (E, Fig. 4).

For drapes that reach to the floor, measure from upper edge of top of casement (A) to floor (B). If drapes are to reach just to top of baseboard, measure from upper edge

of casement (A) to top of baseboard (C).

For glass curtains or draw curtains extending just to the window sill, measure from top of sash (F) to window sill (G). Measure from inner edge of one casement to inner edge of opposite casement when estimating width for glass curtain.

To determine the width of valance, measure from outside edge of side casing (H) to outside edge of opposite casement (I). Eight inches should be added to provide four-inch turn around goose neck rod or valance board. The correct depth of valance is one-sixth of all-over height of window, measuring from floor (B) to top of casement (A).

Making Glass Curtains

Glass curtains should be quite full, 75 to 100 per cent of the window width being allowed for fullness. If they are to be tied back, several inches of extra length must be allowed. They are finished with hems, binding, ruffles or applied hems. When used in pairs, the inner sides and bottom have uniform hems varying in width from one to two and a half inches. The hem on the outer edge is usually one-fourth of an inch wide. When glass curtains are hung without drapes, the side hems are uniform in width, usually one inch. If preferred, the side and bottom hems may be made the same width. All hems are made double in sheer material. Glass curtains when used with drapes are hung without a heading. When used alone, they usually have a two-inch double heading.

Making Drapes

For pendent hanging, the top of the curtain is either box plaited or left flat. It is suspended by metal or wooden rings sewed to the top edge.

Box or French plaited draperies having a heading are hung with either rings or hooks applied to the back lower edge of heading at each plait. The rings are partly inserted and the hooks are sewed flat.

The depth of the heading depends upon the weight of the material and relative size of drape.

Lining Drapes

Trim off the selvages of the drapery fabric. Lay the material face down on the table. Fold back the edges one inch at the sides and three inches at the top and bottom (Fig. 5). Hold in place with basting or pins inserted at right angles. Miter the corners and catch-stitch the edges in place. Cut the lining one and one-half inches longer and one inch wider than the drape after hems have been turned. Stitch a two-inch hem in the bottom of the lining. Lay the lining face up on the wrong side of the drape, placing it so the hemmed edge is one inch from the bottom. Fold the lining down the center and tack it to the center of the drape with knot stitches every six inches along the fold. The thread may be carried along continuously from knot to knot if care is taken not to draw it. Fasten the hem of the lining to hem of the drape with a one inch French tack, at this center fold. Turn under the outside edges of lining so that only one-fourth inch of the drape is exposed. Baste and slip-stitch lining to drape. Turn under the top of lining so that it comes one-half inch from the top edge of drape. Slip-stitch to position.

Altering Curtains

Worn shades may be turned end for end. The ragged lower portion is cut off and replaced with cloth of matching color before the change is made. Shades may be repainted but a more simple method is to replace the fabric with a home tailored one of the same length and width.

Glass curtains and drapes may be widened and lengthened by wide bindings, inset strips or ruffles of harmonizing material. They may be pieced under draperies, valances and tie-backs.

Cleaning Curtains

Unless guaranteed washable, shade fabrics should never be cleaned with water, but sponged lightly with gasoline, taking care not to wrinkle or crease the shade during the process of cleaning. White or light colored shades can be cleaned with art gum.

The life of draperies and fine glass curtains may be prolonged by dry cleaning. They should be cleaned frequently as dirt rots the fiber. If washed, they should be measured before washing and stretched to measure for drying. They may be dried on frames or pinned to sheet covered blankets on the floor. If a few are cleaned at a time, they may be dried on curtain rods. The tops are spread straight and the lower edges are weighted and held straight by inserting shade sticks in the hems.

References:—

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Helen Koues—How to be your own Decorator.

Filed materials from Extension Service bulletins, commercial and magazine articles.

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